

VZCZCXRO0348
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #1349/01 1091004
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 191004Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0802
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 001349

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/15/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IR](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: BARZANI DISCUSSES DE-B'ATHIFICATION, HYDROCARBONS,
TURKEY, IRAN WITH AMBASSADOR

REF: BAGHDAD 1256

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan Crocker per 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: In a meeting with Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani, also attended by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, on April 12 in Erbil, the Ambassador pressed for action on de-Ba'athification, hydrocarbons legislation, and improvements in relations with Turkey. President Barzani discussed his attempts to foster reconciliation and gave his opinion of Maliki's "evil" advisers. Nechirvan claimed that hydrocarbons negotiations should go smoothly, but told Embassy staff privately that the Kurds would need to "hold their ground" as the legislation passed through the Council of Representatives (CoR). President Barzani claimed to want good relations with the Turks, but blamed Turkey's "hysterical" behavior for the rise in rhetoric. He said there was little he could do militarily on the PKK issue but promised to engage with the PKK on holding to the ceasefire. Finally, Barzani discussed Iranian interference in Iraq and called out Ahmed Chalabi as Iran's main agent here. END SUMMARY.

Help with De-Ba'ath, Support for Maliki

¶2. (C) The Ambassador remarked on the changing landscape in Erbil as a result of greatly increased construction, noting that he recognized only one building from four years earlier. He thanked Barzani for being a good friend to the U.S. and offered greetings from President Bush. He said that the U.S. needs Barzani's help in Baghdad. He told Barzani that the KRG cannot exist on its own - if Iraq fails the KRG will fail. For this reason staying isolated from national-level affairs would be a grave mistake.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador asked Barzani to use his influence with both Sunni and Shia to help bring de-Ba'athification forward and also reiterated U.S. support for the Maliki government. He said the government is not perfect but now is not the time to make changes. Barzani responded with a history of Iraq. He said "it's all about fear:" the Sunnis fear the future, the Shia fear the past, and the Kurds fear both. He thought that people in the West do not understand the depths of the Shia fear of a Sunni return to power. He said part of the problem is with the neighbors, asserting that Iran was the worst, followed by the Saudis and other Arabs. He reminded the Ambassador that he asked "the Abdullahs" in March not to stoke sectarianism. He briefly discussed the attempts late last year and early this year to form a moderate front, but he said in the current climate it is very difficult.

¶4. (C) In Barzani's opinion, Maliki is "good," but the problem is that there are "hundreds of Prime Ministers down there" in Baghdad. By this, he said he meant that the PM has "evil advisers", especially Sami al-Askari and Sadiq al-Ricabi, who "even hate other Shia." He declared that

there must be a reorganization of the political system because the current one will not work in the long-term. He mentioned his efforts to convene meetings in Erbil to discuss these issues.

Hydrocarbons

15. (C) The Ambassador pressed both Barzanis for quick progress on the draft hydrocarbons law, especially on revenue sharing. He told them that the negotiators from the KRG who were in Baghdad from April 8-10, including Natural Resources Minister Ashti Hawrami, must come back to Baghdad for as long as it takes to reach agreement. He explained that the Kurds would benefit from a completed hydrocarbons deal because they would receive 13 percent of all Iraq's oil revenue, including that from the south.

16. (S) Nechirvan told the Ambassador that he understands the importance of oil to the U.S. and he believes that they can make the hydrocarbons package work. He agreed to send negotiators back to Baghdad and promised to follow them himself. (Note: in a private conversation with Embassy staff during the same visit, Nechirvan said the Kurds intended to dig in more than last time on the oil law. He thought they had given up too much already. He told staff that 17 percent of oil revenues was the minimum they were prepared to accept.)

Turkey

17. (C) The Ambassador also asked Barzani to stop making

BAGHDAD 00001349 002 OF 003

inflammatory statements that incite the Turks and to take positive action against the PKK. He proposed that Barzani send the Turks a message of friendship, ensure that the PKK adheres to the ceasefire, move PKK elements out of one camp near the border, and remain engaged on Makhmour with a view toward repatriation of its inhabitants and closure of the camp. Barzani claimed to want good relations with Turkey, but blamed Turkey's "hysterical" behavior since the fall of Saddam in 2003 for much of the problems. He said they invited Nechirvan to Ankara earlier in the year and then cancelled their meeting with him. He said since then they have had no contact with the Turks for months, and he had last met the Turkish Ambassador to Iraq in the fall. He said that the KRG wants to emphasize to Turkey that they are profiting from trade with northern Iraq and that eventually they will want to run a pipeline through Turkey that will further enrich them.

18. (C) They know we are against the PKK and they are against us, he continued. He admitted that sometimes he lets his frustration with the Turks get the better of him and he says some things that he should not. He said the controversial interview in which he asserted that the KRG would respond to any threat from Turkey (reftel) took place at a time when Turkey was making statements on this issue "three times a day." He explained that the PKK are too dug into the mountains to be defeated militarily by any army, telling the Ambassador, "You've seen the Kandil area." He did think that the PKK could be whittled to a small hard core. He said when dealing with them we have to keep in perspective that they want to keep the PKK from turning to Ansar al-Sunnah, Al-Qaeda, or Iran. Both Barzanis agreed to issue a statement of friendship with Turkey and President Barzani agreed to send an emissary to the PKK to convince them to stop their talk about the abrogation of the ceasefire.

19. (C) President Barzani said removing the PKK from one camp on the border is difficult because the PKK do not live in camps - they live in caves - and questioned the efficacy of

moving them from one cave to another, particularly as no one is sure where they are anyway. He agreed to stay engaged on the Makhmour issue but refused to force anyone out of the camp or to limit humanitarian aid to the camp.

¶10. (C) Comment: Discussions underscored continuing lack of effective communication between Iraq and Turkey over the PKK issue. The trilateral process has not worked so far, hampered by Turkish intransigence about meeting with the Kurdish member of the Iraqi team, and by general lack of engagement or interest shown by the Iraqi team leader Minister of State for National Security Shirwan Wa'ili. Ambassador will explore whether or not the Turkish Ambassador to Iraq could play a more active role. Absent effective communication, we see little chance for progress on the PKK issue. End Comment.

Iran

¶11. (S) Barzani dwelled on the malevolent Iranian influence in Iraq and explained how they are moving in to Iraq economically. He also claimed that they are dealing with Sunni extremists and using the Iraqi Shia for their own purposes. He called Ahmed Chalabi the Iranian's main agent in Iraq.

¶12. (S) He told the Ambassador that in 1970 two sources told him that a deputy from the Iranian MOIS offered to trade the Hakim family to Saddam in exchange for the Rajabis (NFI). Asked if he had ever relayed that story to SCIRI leader Abdelaziz Hakim, he said no. The Ambassador commented that telling him might be effective.

Latest Statements

¶13. (U) Since the trip north, Nechirvan issued a statement on April 14 that was carried on Kurdistan Satellite TV in which he said the KRG "extends the hand of friendship to Turkey." He also called for the U.S. to play a role in bringing the two "allies" together. On April 15 Nechirvan gave an interview to Al-Jazirah in which he reiterated his desire for good relations with Turkey, his view that Turkey has no right to interfere in the issue of Kirkuk, and his belief that Kirkuk should be decided within the timeframe specified in the Iraqi Constitution. He also called the PKK an internal Turkish affair but condemned any armed group that uses the KRG as a base for attacking other countries. In a meeting on April 16, the Kurdistan Leadership Council, led by President

BAGHDAD 00001349 003 OF 003

Barzani, called for an immediate implementation of the decisions passed by the GOI Article 140 Committee. According to Kurdistan TV, the Kurdistan Political Council held a meeting on April 17 in which it announced that the Kurdistan Region will

not interfere in the affairs of "regional countries," nor will it accept any interference. It also announced that the KRG is prepared to improve relations and deal with neighboring countries on the basis of mutual respect and common interests.

CROCKER